

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A floor mat laid in a small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing a small animal, said floor mat being a sheet having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body;

wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric comprising cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in a shape of a sheet and wherein the sheet has a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

4. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

5. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

6. (Previously Presented) The floor matt according to Claim 1 wherein improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 g of dry fabric.

7. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 2 1, wherein the sheet has a water absorption and deodorization property.

8. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 2 1, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

9. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 7, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 g of dry fabric.

10. (Currently Amended) A small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing a small animal, said small animal rearing cage comprising
a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and
a floor mat formed with a sheet having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric comprising cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed in the shape of a sheet and wherein the sheet has a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 10, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

13. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim, 10, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl ~~group~~ groups per 100 grams

of dry fabric.

14. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim, 10 wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim ~~11~~ 10, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

17. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim ~~11~~ 10, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

18. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 16, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl groups per 100 grams of dry fabric.

19. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 10, wherein said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of said rearing box.

Claims 20-25 (Cancelled)

26. (Previously Presented) A small animal rearing cage according to Claim 10, wherein the sheet water absorption property and deodorization property.

27. (New) The floor mat according to Claim 9, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

28. (New) The floor mat according to Claim 9, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

29. (New) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 18, wherein the cellulose having carboxyl groups chemically bound thereto is formed with a graft polymerization method.

30. (New) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 18, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

31. (New) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 18, wherein said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of the rearing box.